



The First Printing In Manitoba



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McMurtre, Douglas C.

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THE FIRST PRINTING
IN MANITOBA



The First Printing in Manitoba

BY

Douglas C. McMurtrie



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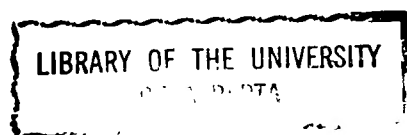
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*Two hundred and fifty copies
only reprinted from the Printing
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1930.*





The First Printing In Manitoba



THERE have been published a number of accounts of the beginnings of newspaper publishing in Manitoba,* and the interesting story of the printing done by James Evans among the Crees at Norway House has also been frequently told. It might seem, therefore, that another article on the first printing in Manitoba would have nothing new to offer, especially after M. Fauteux's article has so recently appeared.

During a recent visit to Winnipeg, however, I had opportunity, through the courtesy of Mr. W. J. Healy, the distinguished Provincial Librarian of Manitoba, to make note of further information regarding Manitoba journalistic history, and to examine and describe some

*For example, the "Sketch of Canadian Journalism," by E. B. Biggar, in *The Canadian Newspaper Directory* (Montreal, 1892), pp. 44-53; the chapter on Manitoba, by J. P. Robertson, in *A History of Canadian Journalism* (Toronto, 1908), pp. 181-192; and articles by G. B. Winship, Alex H. Sutherland, and E. A. Blow in the *Canadian North-West Historical Society Publications*, Vol. 1, No. 4, part 1 (Battleford, Sask., 1928), pp. 11-38. The latest study of the subject to appear is that by M. Aegidius Fauteux, in chapter 6 of his *Introduction of Printing into Canada*, published in parts by the Rolland Paper Company, of Montreal.

issues of the early press other than newspapers, which have been accorded no attention whatever by typographic historians.

This apparent neglect of early Manitoban pamphlet, book, and broadside imprints constitutes, however, no exception to what seems to be the general rule. For the newspaper history in almost every city, state or province has invariably received the lion's share of attention. In view of this circumstance, I for my part have made issues of the pioneer press other than newspapers my field of special interest.

The earliest independent issues of the Manitoba press which I have been able to locate are certain broadsides intimately connected in their origin not only with a dramatic crisis in the history of the pioneer newspaper at Winnipeg, but also with some critical days in the history of the province of Manitoba. These few notes on Manitoba printing and publishing history are here offered in supplement to M. Fauteux's excellent contribution. To put them on record, however, requires as background a brief review of the founding of the first newspaper; and to complete the picture of early printing in Manitoba, some mention of the work of Evans is necessary.

It is quite generally known that James Evans, a missionary to the Indians with wide experience elsewhere in Canada, did the first printing in the region now comprised within the Province of Manitoba. This was in 1841, at the mission near Norway House, approximately three hundred miles north of Winnipeg. In the

summer of 1840 Evans went into the Northwest and spent the following winter studying the Cree language. He had already evinced a genius for mastering aboriginal languages, and for the Cree he devised a system of syllabic signs, by the aid of which he succeeded in teaching the Indians to read and write.

The first texts in the Cree language were written on birch bark with ink made from chimney soot. But Evans soon found that some printed texts would be practically indispensable to his work and therefore endeavored to procure a press. The Hudson's Bay Company at that time opposed the importation of this instrument of enlightenment, and the missionary was thus thrown upon his own resources to meet the need for printing. With lead taken from the lining of tea chests and other sources, he cast some home-made types in moulds cut from wood. In the spring of 1841, he set up sixteen pages of hymns in the Cree language and then, with the aid of a jackpress used for bundling furs, printed off a hundred copies.

Later on, the objections of the Hudson's Bay Company were overcome, and a printing press with a supply of specially made types was sent to Evans from England, with a stipulation on the part of the Company, however, that the material was to be used only for purposes of religious instruction. With this equipment, other Cree texts were printed.

The press as a medium for disseminating news and information was kept out of the region by the opposition of the Hudson's Bay Company for eighteen years

after Evans' first crude attempt at printing. The first use of the press on a commercial and professional basis did not occur until December, 1859. Then William Buckingham and William Coldwell established the *Nor'-Wester* at the Red River Settlement (now Winnipeg), the first issue being dated Wednesday, December 28, 1859.

We learn something about the ambitions and qualifications of these pioneer publishers from an editorial in the *Hastings (Ontario) Chronicle* of September 9, 1859:

"The *Nor'-Wester*—this is the title of a paper about to be started at Fort Garry, Red River, by Messrs. Buckingham and Coldwell. Great credit is due to these gentlemen for undertaking so bold and arduous an enterprise. They will, if successful, have the honor of establishing the first newspaper in the Red River country, and their labours will no doubt assist materially in developing the innate resources of what will yet be a great province. The editors and proprietors are not only professional reporters and writers, but practical printers, and they will therefore be able to do their own work, and do it well. Mr. Buckingham has for some time past been one of the Parliamentary Reporters for the *Globe*, and Mr. Coldwell the same for the *Leader*."

As practical newspaper men, these two adventurers into the northwest had seen to it that their enterprise received wide publicity; their first issue quotes notices of their undertaking which appeared in a number of Canadian papers and even in papers at Milwaukee and at St. Paul.

The equipment for this frontier printing plant was wisely purchased in great part at St. Paul, Minnesota, to avoid the enormous difficulties of transportation from eastern Canada. To get the materials from St. Paul, however, turned out to be no mean task. Fortunately for the completeness of the historical record, the circumstances attending the acquisition of the equipment and its transportation to Fort Garry were recorded by William Coldwell himself, in a paper prepared for a dinner of the Winnipeg Press Club and printed in an account of the affair in the *Manitoba Free Press* of April 2, 1888:

"November 1st, 1859, the first newspaper outfit for Northwest British America arrived on the Assiniboine River at the crossing opposite Upper Fort Garry—the *Nor'-Wester*, with W. Buckingham and W. Coldwell as its proprietors. Up to that date no newspaper was printed anywhere throughout the vast region stretching from the north shore of Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains, and from the U.S. boundary line as far north as any one of our craft would care to stretch. In one little corner of the territory, the Red River Settlement, there were 10,000 people, and here we resolved (in Salvation Army phrase) to 'open fire.'

"The paper, and much of the plant, had been purchased in St. Paul, in order to save freight between Toronto (our starting point) and the capital of Minnesota; and on the 28th of September we made a start from the latter city, with ox teams—a very wild start, indeed, as one team ran away at the outset and dis-

tributed some of the type in the streets. But by the time we reached our journey's end, there were no more attempts of running away.

"I shall not stop to note our snail-like progress by the Crow Wing trail, how we struggled through the swamps, worried around and across fallen trees and stumps, toiled up and raced down the sides of the Leaf Mountains, forded rivers with steep banks and boulder-strewn beds, or puzzled out our way via crooked sand-bars over which we went zig-zagging with occasional excursions into the depths alongside. Red Lake River—the widest, deepest, crookedest and swiftest in currents—took some of us up to our necks, and very nearly took me out of this vale of tears altogether.

"One of the respected fellow citizens, Captain Donaldson, a famous traveller in those early days, witnessed the crossing of the caravan at that point; and he has a story he tells with infinite relish as to one of the forders, who was invisible all but a head and a 'stove-pipe' hat! The captain, not expecting to see such a hat there and then, and completely taken aback by the vision, laughed his heartiest, as he does this day when he recalls this scene. On an average we did not exceed between fifteen and twenty miles a day in our march through the wilderness to this promised land. Slow-going, sleepy travel it was, compared with the rapid transit now the order of the day. This fast age has already left the old landmarks far behind. The journey from St. Paul to this point, which took over a month when we first came, has for several years back been performed daily in less

than twenty-four hours. On our way here, 29 years ago, we found the North Western Railway limits to be at La Crosse, on the Mississippi River in Wisconsin. Beyond that town the traveller in this direction had a choice of staging or steamboating. Staging could be obtained to Fort Abercrombie, in Minnesota. Steamboating virtually ended at St. Paul, although some little business was done by steamboating beyond that city."

It had been the original intention of the proprietors to publish the first issue of their paper on the first day of the year 1860. The local council, however, scheduled the departure of a mail on December 28th, so the date of issue was set ahead in order to take advantage of that mail to the "outside."

In the course of a rather eloquent salutatory in their first issue the two publishers avow their adoption of the Red River settlement as their home and affirm their faith in its future—a faith destined to be fully justified:

"We came here 'strangers in a strange land.' Not as enemies, intent upon spying out its nakedness—not as adventurers, indifferent to all considerations save those of self—not as partisans, resolved to further the ends of party or of faction, at whatever cost to the peace of the country. We came with a view of making this place our home. We came persuaded that the time had arrived when this fertile and magnificent country, thrown open to the people of all lands, needs an exponent of its opinion, its feeling, its varied and yet common interests, through the medium of the Press. And the *Nor'-Wester* shall afford evidence of the genuineness of our move-

ment. Today we scatter it broadcast among those who, though personally strangers, are already friends—who, forgetting those differences which in most other countries are the sources of jealousy, mistrust, and contention—the differences of position, origin, religion, and language—have cordially united in their good wishes for our success.”

The first subscriber to the *Nor'-Wester*, we are told, was an Indian chief, known by the name of Hole-in-the-day, whom the publishers met at Crow Wing, Minnesota, before they had even passed the international boundary. “We entered his name on our list,” wrote one of the editors, according to E. B. Bigger’s story, “and were tempted to write ‘esquire’ after it, for with a promptitude which many of our pale-face subscribers would do well to imitate, he at once paid his money, and stated that ours was the only ‘big news’ to which he had ever subscribed.”

There were difficulties about the printing of the first issue. The night before it was to be printed, the paper was wet down, as the practice then was. But when the printers came the next morning to take their “lift” to the press, they found the reams frozen into a solid block, which had to be thawed out before further progress could be made. Nevertheless, the first issue of the *Nor'-Wester* was a creditable specimen of the printer’s craft. It was a five-column paper, the paper page size being about 14½ by 20½ inches. From an announcement in it of “The Red River Printing and Bookselling Establishment, Buckingham and Coldwell,” we learn

that the firm is prepared "to execute all orders with which they may be favored, with punctuality, neatness and despatch." We also learn here that the printing office was equipped with "a super-royal Washington press (Hoe's manufacture) combining all the latest improvements; together with an excellent assortment of jobbing type suitable for posting bills, business, visiting, and wedding cards, circulars, blank forms, billheads, labels, catalogues, invitations to meetings, programmes, books, pamphlets, sermons, and every other description of letter-press."

The volume of job printing done at the Red River Settlement was undoubtedly small, but it is inevitable that many pieces falling within one or another of these specified categories must have been produced in this office. Yet up to the present writing I have been unable to locate any product of the Winnipeg press, other than a newspaper, up until the year 1869. I understand that many early documents preserved in the library of the convent at St. Boniface were destroyed by a fire which undoubtedly deprived us of much material of great historical interest. Yet, in spite of this fire, I believe that there must be extant some products of so active a press as was in operation at Winnipeg during the decade 1860-1870. It is to be hoped that some day they will be discovered and recorded by students of Canadian printing history.

Soon after the establishment of the *Nor'-Wester*, Buckingham sold his interest to James Ross and returned east to become the publisher of the *Stratford*

Beacon. Ross and Coldwell, in addition to printing, publishing and bookselling, also dealt in dry goods and hardware, according to a contemporary advertisement. In 1864 Ross sold out and went east to join the staff of the *Toronto Globe*. In his place, Dr. John Schultz, distinguished among the pioneers of the territory, and later governor of Manitoba, became Coldwell's partner. In the winter of 1864-65 the *Nor'-Wester* plant was entirely destroyed by fire. Dr. Schultz decided to revive the paper, and Coldwell, who had decided to return to Toronto, remained for a time to help get out the next issue of the paper in reduced size. How to continue printing it was a problem. But the Bishop of Rupert's Land offered the use of a small building, and from Rev. Alonzo Barnard, a missionary from Minnesota, a little type brought out for mission purposes was obtained, and also a hand press of ancient design, endowed with many vagaries.

In the spring of 1868, Dr. Schultz imported George Winship, a printer from Minnesota, to take charge of the *Nor'-Wester* office. Winship many years later described this as "a small room, not more than twelve feet square, in the White Store building, and the crudest and most primitive collection of printing material that I ever saw, or have seen since." Schultz transferred the paper in July, 1868, to W. R. Bown, a dentist, who was an intimate friend of the former owner and continued his policies.

Under Bown, the *Nor'-Wester* was swept into the current of the exciting events which made up Mani-

toba's history during the succeeding year or two. The political status of the region became a matter of bitter controversy. Should it be taken into the Dominion of Canada, or remain an independent Crown Colony? Here appeared Louis Riel, the firebrand of the Red River region, head of a self-constituted "provisional government." When Bown declined to place his columns at the disposal of the Riel interests, the plant was seized and the editor imprisoned. The offices of the paper, now in more commodious quarters than those in which Winship first found it, were occupied as a guardroom by the Riel forces.

It was under most unusual circumstances that there was printed a broadside proclamation which is the earliest Manitoba printing, other than newspapers, that I have as yet been able to find. It announced the coming of William Macdougall as "Lieutenant-Governor in and over the North-west Territories" under royal appointment. The *Nor'-Wester* plant was in Riel's hands, and this insurgent had also acquired, just before the expected arrival of Macdougall, a new printing plant brought by William Coldwell, one of the original publishers of the pioneer paper. The problem of Macdougall's adherents was how to get his proclamation printed under the noses of the opposition, which controlled all the printing facilities.

At this juncture George Winship came to the rescue. As coming from "the States," he was supposed to be neutral in territorial matters, and as a printer he was allowed more or less freedom to enter or leave the

THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES.

PROCLAMATION.

By His Excellency the Honourable William Macdougall, a member of the Privy Council of Canada, and Companion of the most honorable Order of the Bath, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-west Territories, etc., etc., etc.

To all to whom these shall come, greeting.

Whereas her Majesty the Queen, by letters patent under the great seal of Great Britain, bearing date the twenty-ninth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine, in the thirty-third year of her Majesty's reign, has been graciously pleased to constitute and appoint me, on, from and after the day to be named by her Majesty for the admission of Rupert's Land and the North-western Territory into the union or Dominion of Great Britain, and over the North-west Territories during her Majesty's pleasure, and to empower, and require, and command me to do, and after the day to be named by her Majesty, to do, all things in due manner that shall belong to my said command and the discharge of my said duties, and the several powers and instructions granted or appointed me by her Majesty, and the act of the Parliament passed in the thirty-second year of her Majesty's reign, for the temporary government of Rupert's Land and the North-western Territory, and the instructions given me with such admission, or I have been graciously pleased to give, and hereafter to give in respect of the North-west Territories, and the instructions given me with such admission, or I have been graciously pleased to give, and hereafter to give in respect of the North-west Territories, under the sign manual or through the sign manual of the Governor-General in Council, according to such laws as are now and shall hereafter be in force in the North-west Territories.

And whereas her Majesty has declared and named the first day of December next as the day for the admission of Rupert's Land and the North-western Territory into the union or Dominion of Great Britain; and whereas by virtue and in pursuance of the British North America Act of eighteen hundred and sixty-eight, the said act for the temporary government of Rupert's Land and the North-western Territory when united with Canada, and the instructions given me with such admission, or I have been graciously pleased to give, and hereafter to give in respect of the North-west Territories, under the sign manual or through the sign manual of the Governor-General in Council, according to such laws as are now and shall hereafter be in force in the North-west Territories.

Now know ye that I have thought fit to issue this Proclamation to make known to all her Majesty's subjects within the said Territories, and the North-west Territories, and I do hereby require all officers and functionaries of their said Territories, and the North-west Territories, to be at the public office of the said Territories, and the North-west Territories, at the time of their admission into the said Territories, and the North-west Territories.

Given under my hand and seal at arms at Red River in the said Territories, the second day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine, and in the thirty-third year of Her Majesty's reign.

By command. I. A. N. Provancher, secretary

Manitoba's earliest known broadside—the secretly printed proclamation of Governor Macdougall (about four-ninths actual size)

Nor'-Wester office. Under the pretext of rearranging some of the cases and other printing material so as to give the guards more room for their card table and impedimenta, Winship managed to smuggle out some types and other material under his long overcoat. With this, and improvising with pasteboard boxes some "cases" in which to distribute the purloined type, he started to set up the proclamation, with the aid of P. G. Laurie, another printer, recently arrived from Ontario. Running out of sorts, he had to make another raid on the *Nor'-Wester* office the following day. But at that he miscalculated the number of lower-case j's needed for the many repetitions of the words "majesty" and "subjects." The proclamation as printed shows how ingeniously this difficulty was overcome by using inverted lowercase f's in place of the missing j's.

This proclamation was dated December 2, 1869. By dint of working all afternoon and most of the night, 300 copies were produced by the "planer process."

Following this proclamation appeared another broadside, dated at Winnipeg, December 4, 1869. This was a "List of Rights" adopted at a meeting held at Fort Garry on December 1st "as the conditions upon which the people of Rupert's Land enter into Confederation" with the Dominion of Canada. It was the counter of the Riel party to the proclamation of authority by Macdougall. A revised and extended "List of Rights" was issued in French on March 23, 1870, and a further pronouncement of the Riel government, also in French, is the "Protestation des Peuples du Nord-Ouest," issued

LIST OF RIGHTS.

- 1 That the people have the right to elect their own Legislature
- 2 That they have the power to amend all laws passed by the Territory over the veto of the Governor by a two-thirds vote.
- 3 That no act of the Dominion Parliament (local to the Territory) be binding on the people unless sanctioned by the Legislature of the Territory.
- 4 That the School Commissioners, etc., be elected by the people.
- 5 A Free Homestead and pre-emption Land Law.
- 6 That a portion of the public lands be appropriated to the benefit of Schools, the building of Bridges, Roads and Public Buildings.
- 7 That it be guaranteed to connect Winnipeg by Rail with the nearest line of Railroad at least a term of five years; the land grant to be subject to the Local Legislature.
- 8 That for the next four years all Military, Civil, and Municipal expenses be paid out of the Treasury.
- 9 That the Military be composed of the inhabitants now existing in the Territory.
- 10 That the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and Courts, and that the same be used in the judicial proceedings.
- 11 That the rights of the Supreme Court shall be preserved as provided in the Constitution.
- 12 That there be established a Judicial Department in the Territorial Government and the appointment of Judges in the Territorial Courts shall be made by the Governor.
- 13 That the people shall elect representatives to the Canadian Parliament.
- 14 That all privileges, franchises and usages existing at the time of the transfer be respected.

The above rights have been agreed upon and adopted by the French and English Representatives of the people of Rupert's Land enter into Confederation.

Witness my hand and seal this 1st day of November 1869, at Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 1st day of November 1869.

By authority to me as Secretary of the Northwest Territories conferred by the Honorable the Minister of the Interior.

Wm. J. Macleod, Secretary.

The foregoing rights have been agreed upon and adopted by the French and English Representatives of the people of Rupert's Land enter into Confederation.

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In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 1st day of November 1869.

By authority to me as Secretary of the Northwest Territories conferred by the Honorable the Minister of the Interior.

Wm. J. Macleod, Secretary.

Printed and Published by Wm. J. Macleod, at his Office, No. 10, Wellington Street East, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Dec 1, 1869.

- [illegible]

The List of Rights of the Reil party in opposition to Governor Macdougall (about two-fifths actual size)

over the signature of "Louis Riel, President," and dated (in handwriting) at Fort Garry, May 14, 1870.

William Coldwell, as we have seen, returned from the east in October, 1869, with the plant for a new newspaper, to be called the *Red River Pioneer*. The outside pages of an issue intended to appear on the first of December had been set up and printed when Riel issued an order against its publication. Coldwell then sold the outfit to H. M. Robinson from "the States" and a member of Riel's government. Under this management there appeared on January 7, 1870, a most peculiar newspaper hybrid. The outside pages were the previously printed pages of the *Red River Pioneer*, favoring Macdougall, while the two inside pages were the *New Nation*, an organ of the Riel government, advocating rebellion against English authority and annexation to the United States. But when the Riel opposition was routed, in the fall of 1870, the equipment came again into the hands of Coldwell, who, with Robert Cunningham, then began publication of the *Manitoban*.

From this time onward new publications began to appear more frequently. In November, 1872, there appeared the first issue of the *Manitoba Free Press*, destined to survive as one of the great newspapers of the Dominion.

With the establishment of provincial government, the official printing became the most important stake for the local printers. The first appointment as "Printers to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty" fell to Coldwell & Cunningham. It was their imprint which appeared on

STATUTES OF MANITOBA

PASSED IN THE SESSION HELD IN THE

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY

QUEEN VICTORIA,

BEING THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIRST PARLIAMENT OF MANITOBA.

Began and holden at Winnipeg, on the Fifteenth day of March, 1871, and closed by
prorogation on the Third day of May, in the same year



THE HON ADAMS GEORGE ARCHIBALD,

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR.



WINNIPEG :

PRINTED BY COLDWELL AND CUNNINGHAM,
PRINTERS TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

Anno Domini, 1871

Title page of the first volume of laws printed
in Manitoba (about $\frac{3}{4}$ actual size)

the early issues of the official *Gazette*, and on the first volume of the Statutes and the first volume of the Journals of the provincial legislature. When we look at these substantial volumes, bearing imprint dates of 1871, so soon after the troublous days, we realize that the press of Manitoba had quickly outgrown its infancy.

Pamphlet

McMurtrie,
D.C.

319474

TO BE SHELVED ON PAMPHLET SHELF
IN CIRCULATION OFFICE

